



Guidance for Responding to a COVID Positive Employee

July 30, 2020

Community spread of COVID-19 is occurring locally. With more and more cases in Lewis & Clark County, sooner or later, your business may be personally affected by a case or a close contact to a case. It is important to know the best way to respond to this situation in order to limit further spread of disease as well as any associated impacts to your business.

Notification and Investigation

- Public health nurses investigate every case of COVID-19 and identify close contacts.
- Cases are isolated until cleared to return to normal activities by the public health nurse (PHN).
- Close contacts are notified by Public Health and ordered to quarantine for 14 days after the last exposure date.
 - Close contact is defined as anyone who has been within 6 feet of a confirmed case for at least 15 minutes during the infectious period. The infectious period begins 48 hours prior to the onset of case symptoms until the case has been isolated.
 - A close contact would also include someone with repeated exposure within a 6 foot area—not necessarily one 15 minute span, but within 6 feet of a case off-and-on repeatedly during the infectious period.
- If a close contact to a COVID-19 case becomes a case during their quarantine period, they will then be isolated until cleared by a Public Health Nurse.
- It is the responsibility of Public Health to notify both confirmed COVID-19 cases and their close contacts. Widespread notification by a business of a potential case or contact within the affected business may cause unnecessary fear and anxiety.
- A business's ability to operate after a case or close contact(s) has been identified within that business will depend on the number of close contacts in quarantine, and resulting availability of staff.
- People who come into **contact with a close contact** to a case, as identified by Public Health, are NOT subject to quarantine,
- If a close contact to a COVID-19 case becomes a case during their quarantine period, any close contacts to the new case will be quarantined.

To best protect your staff and limit the impact on your business, ensure that your staff maintain 6 feet of physical distance from others, wear face masks when in the public or common areas, do not gather together in communal settings for long periods of time, and practice good hand hygiene.

Actions that you can take if you know of an employee who is sick

Clean and Disinfect

- If **more than 7 days** since the person who is sick visited or used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary.
 - Continue routine cleaning and disinfection. This includes everyday practices that businesses and communities normally use to maintain a healthy environment.
- If **less than 7 days** since the sick employee has been in the facility,
 - **Close off areas** used by the person who is sick.
 - Companies do not necessarily need to close operations, if they can close off affected areas.
- **Open outside doors and windows** to increase air circulation in the area.
- **Wait 24 hours** after the sick employee has been in the facility before you clean or disinfect. If 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible.
- Clean and disinfect **all areas used by the person who is sick**, such as offices, bathrooms, common areas, shared electronic equipment like tablets, touch screens, keyboards, remote controls, and ATM machines.
- Vacuum the space if needed. Use vacuums equipped with high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter, if available.
 - Do not vacuum a room or space that has people in it. Wait until the room or space is empty to vacuum, such as at night, for common spaces, or during the day for private rooms.
 - Consider temporarily turning off room fans and the central HVAC system that services the room or space, so that particles that escape from vacuuming will not circulate throughout the facility.
- Once area has been **appropriately disinfected**, it **can be opened for use**.
 - **Workers without close contact** with the person who is sick can return to work immediately after disinfection. Remember, the public health nurses will decide during the case interview who is a close contact.

Develop policies for worker protection and provide training to all cleaning staff on site prior to providing cleaning tasks.

- The risk of exposure to cleaning staff is inherently low.
- Training should include when to use PPE, what PPE is necessary, how to properly don (put on), use, and doff (take off) PPE, and how to properly dispose of PPE.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Hand Hygiene

- What is needed to protect the cleaning staff
 - Cleaning staff should wear disposable gloves and gowns for all tasks in the cleaning process, including handling trash.
 - Gloves and gowns should be compatible with the disinfectant products being used.

- If gowns are not available, coveralls, aprons or work uniforms can be worn during cleaning and disinfecting. Reusable (washable) clothing should be laundered afterwards. Clean hands after handling dirty laundry.
- Additional PPE might be required based on the cleaning/disinfectant products being used and whether there is a risk of splash.
- Removing PPE
 - Gloves and gowns should be removed carefully to avoid contamination of the wearer and the surrounding area.
 - Be sure to clean hands after removing gloves.
 - Gloves should be removed after cleaning a room or area occupied by ill persons. Clean hands immediately after gloves are removed.
- Cleaning staff should immediately report to their supervisor breaches in PPE such as a tear in gloves or any other potential exposures.
- Cleaning staff and others should clean hands often, including immediately after removing gloves. Wash hands with soap and water for 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available and hands are not visibly dirty, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol may be used. However, if hands are visibly dirty, always wash hands with soap and water.
- Additional considerations for employers
 - Follow normal preventive actions while at work and home, including cleaning hands, wearing face coverings and avoiding touching eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
 - Educate all workers, including those performing cleaning, laundry, and trash pick-up, to recognize the symptoms of COVID-19.
 - Ensure workers are trained on the hazards of the cleaning chemicals used in the workplace in accordance with OSHA's Hazard Communication standard (29 CFR 1910.1200^{external icon}).
 - Comply with OSHA's standards on Bloodborne Pathogens (29 CFR 1910.1030^{external icon}), including proper disposal of regulated waste, and PPE (29 CFR 1910.132^{external icon}).

If you have questions or need technical assistance, please call Lewis and Clark Public Health at 457-8900. Thank you for protecting our community from COVID-19.

If you suspect Coronavirus, stay home and contact your medical provider.

For a link to this document and other local information: www.lccountymt.gov/covid-19